

Adopted Resolution

THE EU AND EUROPEANS CAN DO MORE FOR REFUGEES

In 2015, the armed conflicts in the Middle-East, in particular in Syria and Iraq, but also in Libya, Afghanistan and Somalia, and difficult situation in Eritrea, and the lack of any serious perspective of a solution in the short or even medium term, brought about increased numbers of refugees to the European Union (EU). Member State governments reacted to this development in divergent and often controversial ways. These events have exposed the deep divisions and insufficient will of the EU Member State governments to work together in order to deal with the realities of refugees and migrants, which are a complex process.

We denounce the rampant populist discourse against the refugees and migrants, and its growing contamination of mainstream political forces; on the other hand, we are convinced that the increased numbers of refugees are a challenge, but that it is possible for the EU to deal with it in a humane and adequate way, if the right policies are implemented and resources are found by both the EU and national governments. Failing to do so would lead to increasing divisions and tensions in our societies and would contribute to the creation of new physical and emotional borders between and within our countries.

Unfortunately, many governments fail to recognise this risk and continue to uphold the illusion of stopping this process with repression, cumbersome procedures, fences and even outright human rights violations. This short-sighted approach has led over the years to wrongful priorities and insufficient resources being set aside for positive actions; it is today not only filling the pockets of smugglers and criminal gangs, but much more tragically it is costing the lives of thousands of innocent people. It is transforming the legal obligation of protecting people in danger into a conditional option, left to the good will of governments. It is giving enormous political and media scope to xenophobic tendencies and extreme right forces and groups, which are trying to dig into and to exploit and foster people's fears. The bringing down of Schengen or the externalisation of the management of the refugees at the EU borders are no acceptable answers. And are also leading to an indiscriminate closing of migration and residence for third country citizens who do not flee from war or persecution, irrespective of the positive economic and social impact they have in many EU countries.

We want to express again our firm condemnation of any human right violations being perpetrated against those seeking refuge, in particular the acts of violence, unjustified coercion and arbitrary detention which are becoming more and more routine in numerous European countries. It is a situation that we as Europeans cannot and should not tolerate.

In contrast with inefficient, inadequate and often wrong actions of the EU Member States, we are encouraged by the overwhelming solidarity displayed by citizens and civil society organisations, which is visible in many parts of Europe, within and outside the EU. We are moved by the way in which many, e.g. German citizens, local and regional authorities, accepted the challenge of welcoming refugees instead of closing their doors to them. We praise those who continue to give their time and effort to overcome the lack of means and will of most EU governments, but we know that this is not enough. We are convinced that Europe can deal with these challenges and find adequate solutions, but we need a deep and swift change of attitude, policy and of priorities in the way in which the EU and its Member States deal with the migration and protection of refugees. To put it into one sentence: we have to combine solidarity with concrete actions, knowing full well how great a challenge this is for our societies.

Reaffirming our resolution on the matter at the Council in Zagreb, the European Green Party:

1. Strongly reiterates that all European states have obligations not only to refugees as defined under the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, but also to those protected against return under international human rights law and customary international law; reminds Member States of the strict obligation to respect the principle of *non-refoulement*

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2. Considers that it is possible and necessary to limit continuous suffering and avoid unacceptable loss of lives by: swiftly setting-up safe and legal ways of entry for refugees; concrete measures such as the issuing humanitarian visas; suspending carrier sanctions like in Directive 51/2001; the waiver of visas for Syrians; the setting up of humanitarian corridors; better funding and easier implementation of measures like family reunification; a humanitarian European search and rescue operation able to operate in international waters and equipped with an appropriate budget on the model of Mare Nostrum; and the organisation of a substantial resettlement programme. These would largely limit the need for those seeking refuge to make dangerous journeys putting their life at risk. Rejects the policy to pursue a military operation under the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) against smugglers in the Mediterranean including in Libyan waters and even on Libyan soil.
- 3 Calls to strengthen the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) so as to treat the asylum applications of incoming refugees fairly and coherently, ensuring them adequate housing and respecting their rights, while offering the opportunity to get an education and a job and giving special attention to women and children, who are specially vulnerable groups.
- 4 Considers in particular that, due to the fact that women might have faced specific situations such as sexual violence while on the way, special programs must be implemented by local and national authorities to ensure there is an adequate special child care so that the women, and especially the mothers, receive medical assistance and find the necessary time to get juridical help when filing for regularisation.
- 5 Is of the opinion that a common asylum system will also end the fragmentation and the divergences in the application of asylum regulation among member states. Remains critical towards a safe countries list, which is highly problematic from a human rights perspective. Asks in the context of the progressive implementation of the common system, for the mutual recognition of positive asylum decisions in order to allow for the internal movement of recognised refugees and the transfer of international protection status within the EU.
- 6 Demands the establishment of a permanent and binding distribution system at EU level, which takes into proper account the preferences of refugees, notably in terms of language, community and family links, the size of member states' overall population and wealth (GDP) and the current imbalances between member states in terms of arrivals and final destinations. As a transitory measure, we welcome the proposal to establish a permanent relocation mechanism for emergencies and the decision to relocate 160,000 refugees from Italy and Greece, but consider the number of persons involved by no means sufficient. Furthermore, this must not be a pretext for delaying the indispensable reform of Dublin Regulation.
- 7 Is convinced that the EU has a particular responsibility in liberating the necessary resources to facilitate relocations and in reconsidering some of the budgetary constraints for some member states, to allow a dignified support of migrants and refugees.
- 8 Calls on all EU member states to honour the pledges of political, financial and administrative support they have taken. This includes pledges to help easing the situation of refugees in their native countries or countries in the neighbourhoods. For example, Lebanon has taken more refugees than the whole EU: over 1,8 million refugees from Syria, in addition to the 450 000 Palestine refugees, totalling over 2,25 million refugees.
- 9 While considering that transit countries need to be supported financially because of the increased numbers of refugees, especially the neighbouring countries of Syria, insists that such agreements should not condone the ill treatment or human rights violations in such places; is particularly concerned about the deal with Turkey that offers political support to Erdogan in exchange for stopping refugees

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- 10 Considers that the establishment in Greece and Italy of so-called “hot spots” in the presence of EU experts, Europol, FRONTEX and the European Asylum Support Office, can play a positive role if and only as long as a substantial relocation from these hotspots to EU countries takes place swiftly. Is concerned that those “hotspots” might turn into deportation and detention centres, as openly envisaged by some member states.
- 11 Denounces the often appalling conditions of migrants and refugees consigned to camps, among others, in France (Calais), Italy, Greece, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Bulgaria, notably because of the highly inefficient treatment of asylum applications; we are convinced that in many countries a deep reform of national regulations and practices is needed; asks the Commission to exert pressure on non-complying states and to financially support those who intend to upgrade and improve their reception facilities.
- 12 Strongly rejects the intention of several member states to link the management of the influx of refugees and the challenge to internal security to the re-establishment of systematic internal border controls within the Schengen area. Getting rid of one of the most successful and visible achievements of the EU, the freedom of movement, and to continue wasting human and financial resources on building fences will not make us safer nor will it stop the increasing number of people who escape from war, poverty or climate disasters.
- 13 We are convinced that only stable solutions to the on-going conflicts, (notably) through diplomatic efforts involving all parties including the EU; a sustainable development policy and a robust commitment to the 0,7 target, a complete change of direction in the EU agricultural and trade priorities, especially arms trade; as well as a shift and a unification of EU member states’ foreign policies especially in terms of military interventions; a serious commitment against climate change as well as support for mitigation and adaptation would make living conditions more acceptable in countries of the global south.
- 14 Moreover, we deem necessary an honest assessment of the consequences of past and present military interventions, notably by NATO and some EU member states, in some conflict zones. We stress that any military intervention must strictly comply with international law. We call for a drastic revision of the European arms export policy.